

## The College of Charleston

# Religious Studies Department Spring 2012 Course Brochure

All Religious Studies courses satisfy the Humanities requirement. There is both a major and a minor in Religious Studies for those with a serious interest in the study of religion. All students who have earned 45 credits or more must declare a major by **October 4, 2011**. If you would like to learn more about the Religious Studies major, please speak with your Religious Studies professor or with the Chair, Zeff Bjerken.

**REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MAJOR IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES:** 33 semester hours, that must include:

- 1) RELS 101 or 105
- 2) RELS 210 Theories in the Study of Religions
- 3) One of: RELS 225, 230, or 235
- 4) One of: RELS 240, 245, or 248
- 5) One of: RELS 250, 260, 270
- 6) One of: RELS 201, 202, 205 or 310\* (\* if taken as a sacred text course, 2 more 300 level courses are needed)
- 7) RELS 450: Senior Seminar in Religious Studies
- 8) One additional course at the 200-level or above
- 9) Two additional courses at the 300-level or above
- 10) Additional elective: 1 additional course

With the approval of the Chair of Religious Studies, one course (200 level or above) in a related discipline may be substituted for one of the courses listed under 8 or 9 above.

**REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MINOR IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES:** 18 semester hours (at least three hours of which must be at or above the 300 level), which must include:

- 1) RELS 101 or 105
- 2) One of: RELS 225, 230, 235, 240, 245, 248
- 3) One of: RELS 201, 202, or 205
- 4) One course from RELS 300-499
- 5) Additional Electives: 2 courses from RELS 105-499. With the approval of the Chair of Religious Studies, one course (200 level or above) in a related discipline may be substituted for number 4 above.

### Religious Studies Course Offerings

FYSM 160-001	Maidens, Mothers, Mystics & Martyrs (freshmen)	Doire	MW	2:00- 3:15	ECTR 103
HONS 381-001	Evangelicalism in America Today	Siegler	TR	1:40- 2:55	MYBK 320
RELS 101-001	Death and Immortality	Knowles	TR	8:00- 9:15	ECTR 103
RELS 101-002	Death and Immortality	Knowles	TR	9:25- 10:40	ECTR 103
RELS 101-003	Messiahs and Messianic Movements	Huddlestun	TR	10:50- 12:05	ECTR 103
RELS 101-004	Messiahs and Messianic Movements	Huddlestun	TR	1:40- 2:55	ECTR 103
RELS 101-005	Madness, Ecstasy, & Samadhi	LeVasseur	MWF	9:00- 9:50	ECTR 103
RELS 101-006	Madness, Ecstasy, & Samadhi	LeVasseur	MWF	10:00- 10:50	ECTR 103
RELS 105-001	Introduction to World Religions	Hladky	MWF	10:00- 10:50	ECTR 116
RELS 105-002	Introduction to World Religions	McDaniel	MWF	11:00- 11:50	ECTR 219
RELS 105-003	Introduction to World Religions	McDaniel	MWF	12:00- 12:50	ECTR 219
RELS 115-001	Religion and Society in India & Tibet	Bjerken	TR	12:15- 1:30	ECTR 103
RELS 115-002	African American Religion, Politics, and Environmental Justice (Freshmen Only)	LeVasseur	MWF	1:00- 1:50	ECTR 103
RELS 115-003	African American Religion, Politics, and Environmental Justice (Open to All Students)	LeVasseur	MWF	3:00- 3:50	ECTR 103
RELS 185-001	Women and Religion	Doire	MW	4:00- 5:15	ECTR 103
RELS 205-001	Sacred Texts of the East	McDaniel	MWF	9:00- 9:50	ECTR 219
RELS 230-001	The Christian Tradition	Doire	TR	12:15- 1:30	ECTR 219
RELS 230-002	The Christian Tradition	Doire	TR	1:40- 2:55	ECTR 219
RELS 248-001	Religious Traditions of China and Japan	Siegler	TR	9:25- 10:40	ECTR 219
RELS 248-002	Religious Traditions of China and Japan	Siegler	TR	10:50- 12:05	ECTR 219
RELS 250-001	Religions in America	Hladky	MWF	1:00- 1:50	ECTR 219
RELS 298-001	Special Topics: Sociology of Religion	Nielsen	MWF	12:00- 12:50	BELL 415
RELS 360-001	Myth, Ritual, and Symbol	Huddlestun	MW	2:00- 3:15	ECTR 219
RELS 450-001	Revisiting Religion after 9/11: Religion & Violence	Bjerken	MW	4:00- 5:15	MYBK 119

**FYSM 160.001: Women and Religion: Maidens, Mothers, Mystics and Martyrs****Prof. Louise Doire    No Prerequisites                      Section 001 (MW 2:00-3:15)                      ECTR 103**

Students will explore several themes in the study of women's religious history. From the ancient period: women's various roles and activities as members of religious communities, the variety of symbols and images for the divine feminine/goddesses, the narratives of other female mythic figures and finally, representations of women in ancient and sacred texts. During the medieval period we will focus on constructions of holy virgin, saint, martyr and mystic, and spend some time exploring the significance of religion during the European persecution of women. The latter part of the course will find us in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries where we will study how religious rhetoric and texts were appropriated in appeals to the abolition and First Wave feminist movements.

**HONS 391.001: Evangelicalism in America Today****Prof. Elijah Siegler    Section 001 (TR 1:40-2:55)    MYBK 320**

This course looks at evangelicalism in America culture from an interdisciplinary perspective. After defining "evangelicalism" and placing it in its historical contexts, this course will focus on specific themes including politics, youth culture, mass media, and gender. Readings will be taken from the flood of books and articles about evangelicalism that have appeared in the last 10 years or so, including novels, ethnographies, investigative journalism, popular non-fiction, and historical scholarship. We will attempt to understand how evangelicalism shapes (and is shaped by) various aspects of American culture.

**RELS 101-001/002: Death and immortality****Prof. Roddy Knowles                      No Prerequisites                      Section 001 (TR 8:00-9:15)                      ECTR 103**  
**Section 002 (TR 9:25-10:40)                      ECTR 103**

This course is an introduction to the academic study of religion through the theme of death and immortality. Death is an inescapable fact of life, and all religious traditions attempt to come to grips with it. This course examines death in light of the myriad ways humans have attempted to accept, overcome, deny, defeat, or transcend it. Is there a good and a bad way to die? How should we dispose of a corpse? Do we have a soul and does it reincarnate? Is there an afterlife? Is immortality possible? What techniques are used in attempts to achieve it? Religious traditions have tried to answer these questions for millennia, and we will work to understand how. Topics such as ancestor worship, cremation, salvation, near death experiences, mourning, and reincarnation will be considered in American Spiritualism, Hinduism, and Christianity. We will come to see how the body and soul are conceived of differently in each of these traditions and how that relates to conceptions of death and immortality.

**RELS 101-003/004: Messiahs and Messianic Movements****Prof John Huddlestun                      No Prerequisites                      Section 003 (TR 10:50-12:05)                      ECTR 103**  
**Section 004 (TR 1:40- 2:55)                      ECTR 103**

This course introduces the student to the academic study of religion through an examination of a particular theme in a handful of selected traditions. Following some discussion of the topic of religion and how to define it, we will focus on messiahs and messiah-like figures (and related movements) in three religious traditions: Judeo-Christian tradition (setting the biblical foundation), Islam (especially Shi'i Islam), and, more briefly, Buddhism (the Future Buddha Maitreya). Our examination of these will draw principally upon primary texts, along with some supplementary readings. The approach will be for the most part historical and more comparative as the course progresses, with some attention to theories regarding failed messianic movements. In addition, the messiah theme provides an entry into many of the central ideas or concepts of each tradition; in this manner, the student should acquire as well some understanding of the basic tenets of each tradition and also an appreciation for its respective adherents.

**RELS 101-005/006: Madness, Ecstasy, & Samadhi—Religious Experience & the Quest for the “Divine”**

**Prof Todd LeVasseur      No Prerequisites      Section 005 (MWF 9:00 - 9:50)      ECTR 103**

**Section 006 (MWF 10:00-10:50)      ECTR 103**

This course approaches the academic study of religion via the lens of religious experience. The particular experience that will be explored and investigated over the semester is the experience of the “Divine.” The course critically examines techniques for achieving realization of, and/or union with the “divine” by comparing and contrasting these techniques across three traditions: Hinduism, Buddhism, and New Age religiosity. These objectives will be met by reading and discussing primary sources and scholarly articles and by watching various films.

**RELS 105-001: Introduction to World Religions**

**Prof. Katie Hladky      No Prerequisites      Section 001 (MWF 10:00-10:50)      ECTR 116**

The aim of this course is to take a selective look at the development of key religious traditions through various cultural contexts and across a significant expanse of history. Students will be introduced to the academic study of religion and to the sociological, theoretical, and practical dimensions of many major world religions. The course will cover Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Taoism, Shinto, and Confucianism as well as African and Native American indigenous religions. Special attention will be paid to historical change and diversity within each tradition, including contemporary religious expressions, schisms, and controversies. This course will initiate the student into critical thinking and reflection on religion, the similarities and differences among religions, and the relationship between religion and politics. There will be daily quizzes, three exams, and three short papers.

**RELS 105-002/003: Introduction to World Religions**

**Prof. June McDaniel      No Prerequisites      Section 002 (MWF 11:00-11:50)      ECTR 219**

**Section 003 (MWF 12:00-12:50)      ECTR 219**

This course will examine a wide variety of religions, including Indigenous religions (Hawaiian, Australian, African, Inuit), Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Ancient Near Eastern religions, Rastafarianism, varieties of shamanism and new religious movements. We shall discuss their beliefs and rituals, and assignments will include visits to religious sites in Charleston. There will be films and guest speakers, three tests and two papers.

**RELS 115.001: Religion and Society in India & Tibet**

**Prof. Zeff Bjerken      No Prerequisites      Section 001 (TR 12:15-1:30)      ECTR 103**

This course is an introduction to two Asian religious traditions, Hinduism and Buddhism, and how they have shaped the societies of India and Tibet. The course will survey the traditional social organization (e.g. the caste system, religious hierarchies, monasticism, the status of women), and the practices and beliefs of Hindus and Buddhists, including their origin myths, life cycle rituals, and their ethical norms. In particular we will examine the religious and political reforms of Mahatma Gandhi and the Dalai Lama, two of the most important leaders of the twentieth century. The non-violent spiritual ideals of Gandhi and the Dalai Lama present us with an alternative to our modern consumer-oriented technological culture, where people seek what they are programmed to seek. This course will encourage you to really “Think Different,” as the Apple Computer advertisements that once featured both Gandhi and the Dalai Lama put it.

**RELS 115.002/003: African American Religion, Politics, and Environmental Justice**

**Prof. Todd LeVasseur      No Prerequisites      Section 002 (MWF 1:00-1:50)      ECTR 103 \*Freshmen only**

**Section 003 (MWF 3:00-3:50)      ECTR 103 \*Open to all**

This course analyzes the historical and contemporary interaction between African American religion (broadly conceived), politics, and environmental justice, and does so from the theoretical lenses of sociology of religion and religion and ecology. The course consists of discussion, reading of primary and secondary texts, films, and guest lectures as we explore the interactions between African American religious belief and practice and how

this influences politics in African American communities, and issues of environmental justice in American society.

**RELS 185.001: Women and Religion**

**Prof. Louise Doire No Prerequisites Section 001 (MW 4:00-5:15) ECTR 103**

In this course students will examine two aspects of "woman" as she has been encountered in human religious history, i.e., through the religious roles of women, and representations of the divine feminine. Attention will be paid to religious and cultural gender constructions and role expectations. These roles include the priestess, the holy virgin, the saint, the martyr and the mystic. Treatment of the divine feminine will focus on images of the goddess through various historical time periods and cultures. The methodology will consist of analysis through historical, comparative and feminist criticism.

**RELS 205- Sacred Texts of the East**

**Prof. June McDaniel No Prerequisites Section 001 (MWF 9:00-9:50) ECTR 219**

This class will study sacred texts from a variety of Eastern religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, Jainism, and Sikhism. These texts will include the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Tao te Ching*, and the *Analects*, as well as shorter writings from these traditions. We shall also include the *Qur'an*, as Islam is widespread in South and East Asia. We shall examine concepts of creation, the nature of the sacred, the ways that human beings should live, the ways that sacred texts are put together and handed down, and the ways that they have been understood and applied in the modern world. There will be two tests, two papers, and a group presentation.

**RELS 230.001/002: The Christian Tradition**

**Prof. Louise Doire No Prerequisites Section 001 (TR 12:15-1:30) ECTR 219**  
**Section 002 (TR 1:40-2:55) ECTR 219**

This course would more accurately be titled, "The Christian Traditions." As a survey course of the history of events and ideas this will be an ambitious undertaking as we consider a diversity of Christianities in their historical, theological and ethical dimensions. Historically, we will sweep through the centuries and examine development and growth from the Apostolic Age in the ancient Near East, through the Middle Ages in Europe and to present day America. Theologically, we will study doctrinal teachings on God, Jesus of Nazareth, humanity, sin, redemption and the sacraments. Ethically, we will encounter a variety of issues that continue to challenge; war and peace, euthanasia, sexuality and marriage/same-sex marriage, economic justice, and the influence of Christianity on American politics.

**RELS 248.001/002: Religious Traditions of China and Japan**

**Prof. Elijah Siegler No Prerequisites Section 001 (TR 9:25-10:40) ECTR 219**  
**Section 002 (TR 10:50-12:05) ECTR 219**

This course provides an overview of the history, worldviews, and practices of Chinese and Japanese religions. We begin with the earliest period of Chinese history, the Shang dynasty (ca. 1550-ca. 1030 B.C.E.), and end with the present day. Although we will consider discrete traditions such as Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, Shinto, and various new religious movements, we pay special attention to thematic issues (religion and the state; religion and popular culture; religious change) and contemporary issues in East Asian religions, including their internationalization. Sources to be studied include philosophical and mystical classics, classical mythology, a 16th century adventure novel, and a Japanese animated film.

**RELS 250.001: Religions in America**

**Prof. Katie Hladky No Prerequisites Section 001 (MWF 1:00-1:50) ECTR 219**

This course is designed to probe encounters between various religious groups and people and to explore the way that religion plays a role in shaping American history. Students will be introduced to the history of religion in America through both a general survey of religions and a series of case studies designed to illustrate major themes and provide a microscope into some of the religious groups that have shaped this country. The course begins by exploring the role of religion in encounters between Native Americans and European Americans and

moves through history highlighting major and minor religious groups and ideas that will help students understand American history and our contemporary circumstances. Topics will include: Nation of Islam, Salem Witch Trials, Religion and Immigration, Evangelicalism, Mormons, and the Native American Church (Peyote Religion). Special attention will be paid to issues of gender, race, politics, sexuality, and violence. There will be daily quizzes, two exams, and three papers.

**RELS 298.001: Sociology of Religion**

**Prof. Donald Nielsen No Prerequisites Section 001 (MWF 12:00-12:50) BELL 415**

This course focuses on the sociological interpretation of religious institutions, groups, movements, and religious experience generally, and their functions in society. The ideas of major pioneers in the sociology of religion will be emphasized, including those of Karl Marx and the Marxists, Max Weber, Ernst Troeltsch, Emile Durkheim, and many other contemporary figures, too numerous to mention. Although the course text focuses on contemporary developments in the sociology of religion, the course will also emphasize the historical study of the role of religion in varied social and cultural settings. The course will deal with the relationship of religion to the economy, politics and the state, social classes, race and ethnicity, gender, the family, health and healing, education, as well as other social structures, institutions and roles. Topics covered include the definition of religion, theories of religion and society, the role of churches, sects, denominations, cults and new religious movements in social change, the problem of secularization, social change and the globalization of religions, the impact of mass media on religion, the problem of church-state relations, and a variety of other topics. In addition to lectures, the course will encourage class discussion of issues in the sociology of religion.

**RELS 360.001: Myth, Ritual, and Symbol**

**Prof. John Huddleston No Prerequisites Section 001 (MW 2:00-3:15) ECTR 219**

Since its inception, the discipline of religious studies has struggled in its attempts to address both the meaning of and interrelationships among the three central topics of myth, ritual and symbol. In this course, we examine the rich and variegated history of this academic discussion and debate. Drawing from the vast literature in religious studies, anthropology, and sociology, we will address a number of concerns across a range of religious, social, and political situations. What is the place of myth, ritual, and symbol in human social life? Do myths or symbols reflect reality, or create it? Do myths or symbols have universal meaning? Do rituals simply reflect one's belief or worldview or do they create it? Can one have rituals without meaning? What about rituals that fail? Following a reading of some of the most influential figures and selected responses to their work, we will focus on some theoretical issues of ritual, and, finally, on how myth, ritual, and symbol are created, used (or abused), revised and given authority in modern life in legitimating or reinforcing existing religious and socio-political institutions.

**RELS 450-001: Revisiting Religion After 9/11: Religion and Violence**

**Prof. Zeff Bjerken No Prerequisite Section 001 (MW 4:00- 5:15) MYBK 119**

Religious violence is a slippery topic, one that is sensitive, complex, potentially offensive, but of major importance. Defining "religion" is notoriously difficult. Defining "violence" turns out to be just as tricky. This seminar will provide students with critical tools from the discipline of Religious Studies to make sense of current events in which religion is intertwined with nationalism and the preservation of ethnic and racial identities, for these toxic combinations often result in violence. We will examine Hindu-Muslim conflicts in modern India, conflicts between Christian evangelicalism and African animism, terrorism and the "war on terror" in America after 9/11, and the escalating role of religious rhetoric in American politics today. This course is designed as a seminar not a lecture course, and it is the capstone course for the Religious Studies program.

## 2012 MAYMESTER - SUMMER I - SUMMER II

Maymester (May 14-30)					
RELS 105.001	Introduction to World Religions	LeVasseur	MTWRF	1:00- 4:30	TBA
RELS 280.001	Religion and Film-	Doire	MTWRF	8:30- 12:00	TBA
Summer I (June 4-July 3)					
RELS 101.001	Madness, Ecstasy, & Samadhi	LeVasseur	MTWRF		TBA
Summer II (July 9-August 7)					
RELS 120.001	Religion and Science Fiction	Aghapour	MTWRF		TBA

### Maymester 2012 (May 14- 30)

#### **RELS 105-001: Introduction to World Religions**

**Prof. Todd LeVasseur      No Prerequisites      Section 001 (MTWRF 1:00-4:30)      ECTR 103**

This course is designed to introduce students to the more popular religions (in terms of adherents) of the globe. By utilizing a comparative and historical approach, the course investigates the origin and flourishing of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The course also briefly covers Indigenous Religions, some of the key theorists in religious studies, and ends by looking at religion in today's globalized world. The class consists of lectures, reading and discussing sacred texts, videos, and discussing how and why religion is a driving force behind contemporary social and political issues.

#### **RELS 280-001: Religion and Film: St. Joan Goes to Hollywood**

**Prof. Louise Doire      No Prerequisites      Section 001 (MTWRF 8:30-12:00)      ECTR 103**

Students will explore the pervasive presence of religious themes in film including representations of saint and sinner, and interpretations of redemption, God, self-sacrifice and the human condition. We will view and analyze films that are obvious in their portrayals of religious subjects, such as "Saint Joan," "The Mission" and "The Last Temptation of Christ," and those films that are not so obvious in their treatment of religious themes. Through several films we will also examine the intersection of religion and gender as a social construct.

### SUMMER I 2012 (June 4- July 3)

#### **RELS 101-001: Madness, Ecstasy, & Samadhi—Religious Experience & the Quest for the "Divine"**

**Prof. Todd LeVasseur      No Prerequisites      Section 001 (MTWRF 9:45-11:30)      ECTR 219**

**See the course description at the top of page 3.**

### SUMMER II 2012 (July 9- August 7)

#### **RELS 120-000: Religion in Science Fiction**

**Prof. Andrew Aghapour      No Prerequisites      Section 001 (MTWRF 9:45-11:30)      ECTR 219**

From the enchanted world of Tolkien to the stark secularism of Star Trek, science fiction and fantasy almost inevitably deal with the topic of religion. In RELS 120: Religion in Science Fiction, we'll explore how works of science fiction and fantasy portray religion, and how these portrayals resonate with academic theories of religion. For example, we'll study Nietzsche's "death of God" alongside J. G. Ballard's "Drowned Giant," and investigate Mircea Eliade's concept of sacred space through Neil Gaiman's American Gods. We will also look towards how science fiction fandom borders on the religious, as in the case of Star Trek super-fans, or "Trekkies." Grading will be based on active attendance and participation, short response papers, reading quizzes, and a final paper.